2019 Municipal Elections: Ranked-Choice Voting Planning and Implementation

Ordinance related to rules of conduct for municipal elections
Policy question

• Do the proposed rules of conduct for municipal elections meet all state and federal election laws and do they provide the necessary provisions to use the ranked-choice voting method for municipal (mayor and council) elections?

Recommended action

• Motion to approve first reading of ordinance amending St. Louis Park City Code Chapter 10 related to the rules of conduct for municipal elections.

• Set the second reading of the ordinance for December 3, 2018.
How did we get here?

• Charter amendment
  - Adopted by council in May, 2018
  - Provided for use of ranked-choice voting in municipal elections (mayor and council)
  - Use of alternative voting method requires city to provide rules for administration of elections
  - State law does not speak to rules for administration of elections using ranked-choice method

• Ordinance development
  - Series of discussions with council from June – October, 2018
  - Rules required to address many topics including ballot format, number of rankings, tabulation of votes, write-ins, method of resolving ties, counting procedures, voting systems, testing, reporting results, post-election review and recounts.
  - Direction provided by council formed structure of proposed ordinance.
  - Staff reports, presentations, and minutes from discussions available on website.
Common questions

• Does the ordinance apply to all elections in St. Louis Park?
  ➢ No, ordinance only applies to municipal elections for the offices of mayor and city council.
  ➢ RCV can only be used in municipal elections.
  ➢ Ordinance does not apply to elections for federal, state, county or school district elections.

• What is ranked-choice voting?
  ➢ Ranked-choice voting means an election method in which voters rank candidates for an office in order of their preference and the ballots are counted in rounds where votes are distributed to candidates according to the preferences marked on each ballot until one (1) candidate meets the threshold, or until two (2) candidates remain and the candidate with the greater number of votes is declared elected.
Three keys

• Number of rankings

- Ordinance allows voters at least three (3), but not more than six (6), rankings for any municipal office on the ballot.

- Number of rankings allowed needs to be compatible with existing, certified equipment that complies with tabulation method that has been tested and used in Minneapolis and administratively supported by Hennepin County.

- Voters will be allowed up to three (3) rankings per municipal office in 2019.

- Voters are not required to rank and have the option to rank less than three choices.

- Proposed language provides flexibility in the future to potentially increase number of rankings allowed when/if new equipment or technology is available to tabulate beyond three (3) rankings.
Three keys

• Ballot design – three column design

• Must include instructions to voters that clearly indicate how to mark the ballot and how to rank candidates in order of preference

• Consistent with design of ballots used in state elections

• Style compatible with existing, certified election equipment used in Hennepin County

• Style can accommodate school district races (non-RCV) on back of ballot

• Style has been used, tested, and vetted in Minneapolis
Three keys

• Threshold – how a candidate is declared the winner

- Candidate required to reach established threshold in order to be elected.
- Ordinance provides that the threshold be calculated as 50%+1 of the total votes cast for an office.
- If no candidate reaches the threshold, and only two candidates remain, candidate with the most votes will be declared the winner.
- Ranked-choice process kicks in if no candidate reaches the threshold after all first choice votes are counted on election night.
- If a candidate reaches the threshold after all first choice votes are counted, they will automatically be declared the winner on election night.
- Results will continue to be reported on election night, however a winner may not be able to be declared until the following day(s).
Next steps

• Timeline
   Second reading of ordinance on December 3, 2018
   Publication of ordinance on December 13, 2018 (if approved)
   Ordinance takes effect on December 28, 2018 (if approved)

• Public education and outreach
   Extensive outreach and education initiative will begin in early 2019.
   There will be many opportunities for voters to learn about, test, and provide feedback on ranked-choice voting.
   Voters can stay up to date on activities by visiting our website, following the city on social media, articles in Park Perspective, or by contacting the elections hotline.
   Stay tuned – many fun activities and initiatives are being planned!